



**For Immediate Release:**

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## **Back-to-School Starts with a Visit to the Doctor**

Protect your kids against whooping cough, measles, and other illnesses

LOS ANGELES – August is National Immunization Awareness Month as well as the time of year when many students prepare to go back to school. Get your student prepared for the new school year by speaking with your healthcare provider regarding required vaccinations, including whooping cough (pertussis). This year it is especially important for students to receive a pertussis vaccination as cases continue to increase throughout California. Protect your students and family by staying up-to-date with recommended and student-required immunizations to help prevent against the spread of vaccine-preventable diseases.

“California is experiencing an epidemic of pertussis, so far this year in LA County we have nearly doubled the number of pertussis cases that we had for all of 2013,” said Jonathan E. Fielding, MD, MPH, Director of Public Health and Health Officer. “Pertussis is a highly contagious illness that can be prevented through immunization. It is especially dangerous for babies. Pregnant women and those who care for or live at home with a newborn or infant can help protect those too young to be vaccinated by getting the vaccine themselves.”

Pertussis is a respiratory disease that can cause severe, uncontrollable fits of coughing that make it hard to breathe. As of August 4, a total of 516 confirmed and probable cases among children and adults have been reported in LA County, excluding the cities of Pasadena and Long Beach. The number of pertussis cases this year is expected to exceed the numbers in the 2010 epidemic, which caused the death of four infants in the county and more than 970 cases. All residents are encouraged to check their immunization record or ask their health care provider if they are up to date with their pertussis vaccines. The vaccine is recommended for infants, young children, preteens, and adults including pregnant women in their third trimester of each pregnancy.

### **California School Immunization Requirements**

New students or those heading back to school should note that proof of pertussis vaccine, among other immunizations, is required for entry. The following are required vaccines for each grade level:

#### **Preschool:**

- DTaP (diphtheria, tetanus, and acellular pertussis; formerly known as DTP)
- MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella)
- *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib)
- Hepatitis B
- Varicella (chickenpox; if the child has had chickenpox, he/she may not need this)
- Polio

#### **Kindergarten:**

- DTaP
- MMR



- Hepatitis B
- Varicella
- Polio

## **7<sup>th</sup> Grade:**

- Tdap: vaccine must have been given on or after his/her 7<sup>th</sup> birthday

## **College/University:**

- Immunization requirements for colleges and universities vary by institution. Guidelines for students may be found at: [www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/immunize/Documents/IMM-1014.pdf](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/immunize/Documents/IMM-1014.pdf).

All students, parents, faculty, and staff are encouraged to get an annual, seasonal flu vaccine.

## **Personal Belief Exemptions**

Under a new California law (Assembly Bill 2109), a parent or guardian who wishes to exempt his/her child from a childcare or school immunization requirement due to personal beliefs must:

- Receive information from an authorized health care practitioner regarding the benefits and risks of immunizations and the risks of vaccine-preventable diseases.
- Provide the school with “Personal Beliefs Exemption to Required Immunizations Form” (available through the California Department of Public Health) that has been signed and dated by an authorized health care practitioner and the parent, AND a record of any required immunizations that the student has received.

Parents or guardians whose religion prohibits them from receiving medical advice or treatment from a health care practitioner are not required to receive information from an authorized practitioner.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends vaccinations to protect people of all ages from a variety of vaccine-preventable diseases. To print a personalized immunization schedule for you and your family, go to [publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip/syndication/vaccineSchedule.htm](http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip/syndication/vaccineSchedule.htm).

Residents are encouraged to contact their regular healthcare provider for vaccines. Many insurance plans will cover immunizations at no-cost to the patient. People without health insurance or immunization coverage can call the LA County Information Line at 2-1-1 or visit [publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip](http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip) for referrals to no-cost or low-cost vaccines. For more information about immunization schedules, visit the Public Health website listed above or visit [shotsforschool.org](http://shotsforschool.org).

The Department of Public Health is committed to protecting and improving the health of the nearly 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control, and community and family health. Public Health comprises nearly 4,000 employees and has an annual budget exceeding \$900 million. To learn more about Public Health and the work we do please visit <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov>, visit our YouTube channel at <http://www.youtube.com/lapublichealth>, find us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/lapublichealth>, or follow us on Twitter: @LAPublicHealth.